

# On the Move to **BETTER HEALTH**



2023 ANNUAL REPORT

# Foreword



At Rockcastle Regional Hospital and Respiratory Care Center, not a day goes by that we aren't intentional about trying to make the right decisions for our patients and organization's future.

And not a year goes by that we don't look back with pride on milestones we achieved because of the thought and effort put into those day-to-day decisions.

Last year, 2023, was no exception. In February, we surpassed an incredible milestone- 3 million patient encounters, which speaks to an uncommon commitment this organization has to longevity and ongoing success. We accomplished something noteworthy in our nationally-renowned Respiratory Care Center – our team was able to wean from ventilator care nine amazing children who will go on to live more independent lives. We set in motion a fully-equipped mobile health unit that will knock down barriers to quality healthcare and prevention throughout Rockcastle County.

And much, much more – the ongoing recruitment of the next generation of physicians, carrying on a storied tradition of growing our own; critical clinical initiatives that will enhance quality of care; outreach that continues to set the pace for rural hospitals everywhere.

But there is much more to achieve and many ways in which we can get better. Our promise to you is that we will keep striving, keep improving, and keep the focus to make each day count, and to make each year better than the last.

**Stephen A. Estes,**  
*President and CEO*

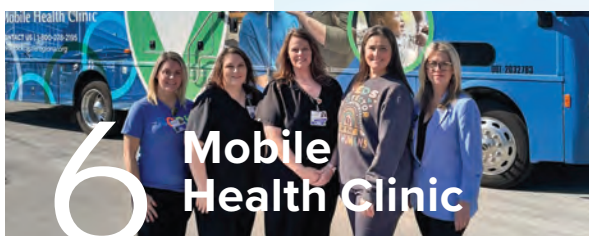


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# 3million strong

**Three million patients in, Rockcastle Regional is still innovating, achieving.**

On Feb. 21, 2023, Rockcastle Regional Hospital met a milestone that few rural hospitals likely have reached – it surpassed 3 million patient encounters.

“That we have served so many for so long is a tribute to Rockcastle Regional’s longstanding commitment to this community,” said Stephen A. Estes, Rockcastle Regional president and CEO, “as well as to the community’s commitment to us.”

That mutual bond formed in 1956, the year local community leaders founded Rockcastle County Hospital.

It has continued ever since, through financial obstacles in the earlier years to long periods of growth, to coping with COVID-19 and the challenges it has presented for healthcare throughout the world.

An innovative spirit coupled with bold, forward-thinking leadership has helped Rockcastle Regional achieve a reputation for quality while maintaining consistent financial stability.

That approach again resulted in new developments and achievements in 2023, including:

## 3 Million Patients



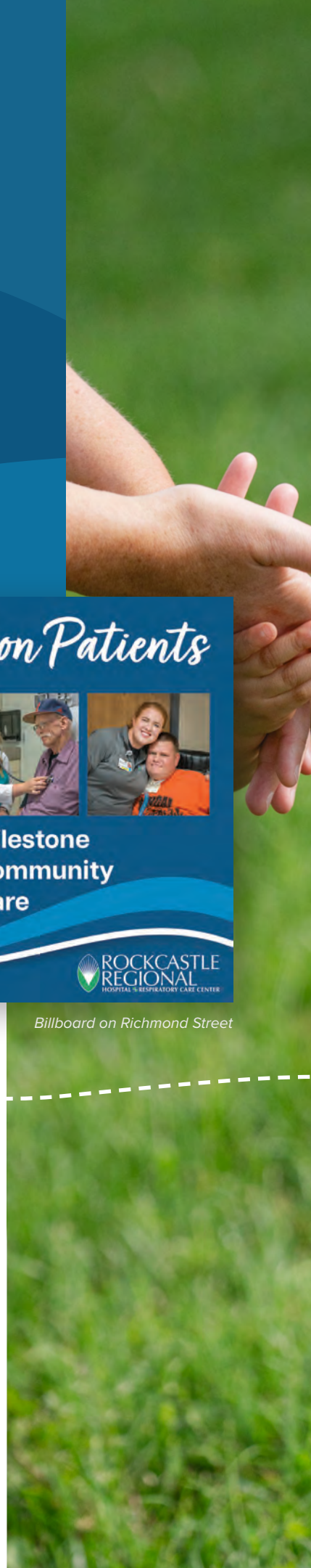
**Remarkable Milestone  
Remarkable Community  
Remarkable Care**



*Chaplain, Brother Luther Allen visits with Respiratory Care Center resident, Billy McWhorter*



*Billboard on Richmond Street*







*Right: Teacher, Gina Nicely shares a laugh with Emily Asllani*



*DJ Hopkins receives occupational therapy from Erin King, OT*

## Little lungs

At any given time, Rockcastle Regional's nationally-renowned Respiratory Care Center is home to many patients who haven't yet reached their third birthday. They are ventilator-dependent, most often because they were born prematurely, and their respiratory systems are underdeveloped.

In 2023, the Respiratory Care Center treated a remarkable number of pediatrics patients, and from May until October, nine of those patients were discharged, returning to a home environment after successfully being weaned from the ventilator.

"Each time a patient is weaned, it's a transformative event in that individual's life," said Mr. Estes.





*Dr. David Brabon performed 50 skin cancer screenings at its first stop at the Woodstock Community Center in September*



## Mobile Health Clinic

In a significant stride towards enhancing healthcare access and addressing geographical barriers, Rockcastle Regional Hospital set the wheels of a new mobile health clinic in motion in 2023.

“By bringing vital health screenings directly to the doorsteps of underserved areas in the region, we are eliminating travel obstacles for our patients and are taking a giant leap towards promoting equitable healthcare for all,” said Mr. Estes.

Equipped with leading-edge medical equipment, the mobile health clinic offers a wide range of health screenings and exams, such as stroke screenings, diabetes and pre-diabetes screenings, well and sick visits, vaccinations, and more. Additionally, the clinic provides education on healthy lifestyles, disease prevention, and proper management of chronic conditions.



*Dr. Callie Shaffer made a stop with the Mobile Health Clinic at the Farmer's Market in September where she provided developmental screenings*



Treatment takes place in the nurses' office during school hours, saving the time and inconvenience of parents having to take off from work.



## Mental health services in schools

In 2023, Rockcastle Regional engaged with the Kentucky Office of Health Equity to implement innovative techniques to address mental health challenges among youth.

The Health Equity office awarded Rockcastle Regional a grant to provide on-site mental health professionals to Rockcastle County Schools.

Rockcastle Regional hired mental health counselors and a patient navigator to work in the schools. Treatment takes place in the nurse's office during school hours, saving the time and inconvenience of parents having to take off from work.



*Elizabeth Loring, LCSW*



*Mackenzie George, LCSW*

Implemented in July, the program yielded 422 referrals through the end of the year, far more than anticipated.

The hospital is also providing community mental health training to help identify when a child has experienced a clinically significant adverse childhood event. Identifying children immediately after an adverse childhood event can mitigate its impact on their future mental health. This, in turn, significantly reduces the likelihood they require inpatient treatment.



# Offering long-term ventilator care for more than 40 years

The year 2023 marked the Respiratory Care Center's 41st year of providing specialized long-term care to patients from all around the state and beyond.

Since 1982, the organization has also offered specialized care for patients who are unable to breathe without the assistance of a mechanical ventilator. That facility, known as the Respiratory Care Center, has grown to be one of the largest of its kind in the nation.

Whatever the reason for the need for mechanical ventilation, the Respiratory Care Center's goal is to eliminate that need. Using an individualized and multi-disciplinary process that starts on day one of a patient's stay, the organization's team of experts wean roughly half of all admitted patients from ventilator care.

"Each time a patient is weaned, it's a transformative event in that individual's life," said Steve Estes, president and CEO of Rockcastle Regional.

The facility utilizes state-of-the-art equipment, including advanced MRI-compatible ventilators, and integrates cutting-edge technology to ensure patient safety. The center provides care that is tailored to individual needs, treating an array of rare and life-threatening conditions.

"Our organization has a unique capacity to apply specialized ventilator care for patients with an incredibly wide range of uncommon conditions," Estes said. "It's part of what sets us apart from other facilities."

In 1980, RHRCC opened its first long-term care unit with 32 beds and added 28 more beds just 12 years later. In 2006, the Respiratory Care Center grew by 19 beds. The organization expanded again by 14 beds in 2009 to meet the growing demand for quality ventilator care.

In 2016, a 67,000 square-foot expansion project was completed which added 28 more ventilator beds to the Respiratory Care Center, bringing the total to 143 and making the hospital the largest freestanding ventilator-dependent facility in the nation. The expansion also added a dialysis clinic, a 2,200 square-foot resident rehabilitation center, six ventilator-dependent beds that can accommodate bariatric patients, a dedicated resident dining area, a larger chapel dedicated to residents of the Respiratory Care Center, and a new employee child development center.

Today, the Respiratory Care Center offers comfortable, professional, long-term care for ventilator-dependent residents. It remains the only facility in the state that specializes in caring for ventilator-dependent adults and children.

**143**  
ventilator beds  
now in service



Rockcastle Regional staff gather to celebrate George Cook's discharge from the care center. When patients are weaned from the ventilator, the Rockcastle team ensures the patient and family have the equipment, training, and instruction they need to stay healthy at home.

**"Each time a patient is weaned, it's a transformative event in that individual's life."**

-Steve Estes, CEO





# INSPIRED? COMPASSIONATE?

*Want to make a difference?*

Rockcastle Regional Hospital and Respiratory Care Center is looking for dedicated professionals to help us maintain and continue our tradition of delivering exceptional care. We are the largest freestanding ventilator unit in the nation, and we need top talent to join our team. It's a tough job, but be advised that there are days that are almost unbearably rewarding.

#### ***We are seeking:***

- Licensed Practical Nurses
- Registered Nurses
- Respiratory Therapists
- State-Registered Nursing Assistants

#### ***Some of our benefits:***

- Employee wellness program (get paid to exercise)
- On-site daycare
- Matching 401K
- Competitive salary
- Scholarships/tuition reimbursement programs
- Attractive health & dental benefits

Apply online at ***rockcastleregional.com/careers***



# New recruits

## Rockcastle QuickCare



Jennifer Jones, APRN



Kristi Hale, APRN

## Rockcastle Family Wellness



Elizabeth Loring,  
LCSW



Mackenzie George,  
LCSW

## In the pathway



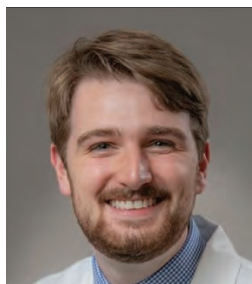
Matthew Gonzalez  
(2026)  
Vanderbilt University  
Medical Center, Division of  
Diabetes, Endocrinology,  
and Metabolism, Clinical  
Fellow PGY 4



John L. Saylor  
(2026)  
Marshall University,  
Division of Pulmonary  
Critical Care, Clinical  
Fellow PGY 4



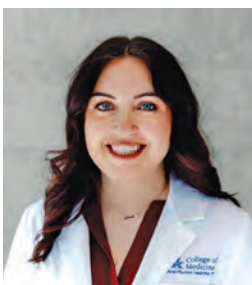
Hannah Bullock (2024)  
University of Kentucky  
College of Medicine,  
Division of Pediatrics,  
Resident PGY 3



Evan Singleton (2025)  
Ascension St. Vincent,  
Indiana Family Residency,  
PGY 2



Madisan Miller (2025)  
Prisma Health Greenville,  
SC, Internal Medicine,  
PGY 2



Hannah Hillard  
(2026)  
Prisma Health Greenville,  
SC, Internal Medicine,  
PGY 1



Mahala Saylor  
(2026)  
Eastern Kentucky  
University, Clinical  
Psychology, third year  
PsyD program



John Cornelius  
(2028-2030)  
University of Kentucky  
College of Medicine, third  
year medical student



Emily Amyx  
(2029-2031)  
University of Louisville  
School of Medicine, Trover  
Clinic program, second  
year medical student



Hope Dull Potter  
Will be attending U of L  
Medical School (2030-  
2032)  
University of Louisville  
School of Medicine, first  
year medical student



# Pathway to medicine goes through Rockcastle Regional

There's no separating Hope Dull Potter's journey to medical school from her hometown hospital. Her pathway went right through the heart of Rockcastle Regional.

"My passion started at an early age by watching my mom (Debbie, an RN) serve patients in the Rockcastle emergency department," Potter said. "It was her patient advocacy that led me on the path towards becoming a physician."

Hope's sister, Abby, began as a patient transporter and now is a Rockcastle Family Wellness (RFW) clinic manager. Hope began as a teenager working in the hospital's child development center in 2014, transitioned to RFW, and gained valuable experience in the emergency department before beginning medical school at the University of Louisville in 2023.

"I was lucky to grow up in an area with a hospital like Rockcastle Regional," she said.

Hope's opportunities to serve in various positions at Rockcastle Regional is no accident.

As hospital leadership sees it, part of the organization's job is to nurture local talent from an early age and set them on their journey to a healthcare career.

"Those young people are the key to this organization's future," said Stephen A. Estes, Rockcastle Regional's President and CEO. "That's why we proactively identify who could be a fit for our mission, then we make sure they have every opportunity to learn and grow with us while they pursue their education."

Hope is a prime example of how that approach yields dividends for the hospital and community.

"Everything I have done and continue to do is to return to my hometown to practice medicine," Hope said. "I love my community. I find it the greatest honor to give back to the people who have taken care of my family and me in our times of need."

"Hope is a very determined young lady," said Brandy Bullock, Rockcastle Medical Arts director and physician liaison. "She has known for a long time that she wanted to go to medical school. She used her time working at Rockcastle to learn as much as she could about how all areas of healthcare work together."



**"I was lucky to grow up in an area with a hospital like Rockcastle Regional."**

-Hope Dull Potter





*Sarah Keller crosses the finish line at the 6th Annual Rock N Run Half-Marathon/5K, one of the races of Rockcastle Regional's County-wide Stride Run/Walk Series.*

# A return of events

In 2023, Rockcastle Regional made a full return to in-person community events after navigating the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. The hospital, known for its commitment to community well-being and outreach, concluded the year with a series of 122 events, reaching 8,475 community touches.

Whether it was the 13th Annual Ladies Night Out, the 11th Annual County-Wide Stride, or the return of the popular health education series, Dinner with the Doctor – the organization continued its commitment to fostering better health through outreach and education.

One remarkable community outreach initiative was the launch of the Mobile Health Clinic, a customized 28-foot accessible RV, fully-equipped to function as a comprehensive medical clinic on wheels.

“The Mobile Health Clinic is a game-changer in reaching individuals where they are,” said community relations director, Jana Bray. “With this new resource, we are further ensuring that healthcare services are more accessible and convenient for everyone.”



*Left: Medical Oncologist Dr. Justin Williams presents to a group of ladies about breast cancer at the 13th Annual Ladies Night Out, an event to raise awareness and educate women on the importance of breast health.*





*Lumaria bags on display in honor and in memory of cancer survivors at the Rockcastle Relay For Life held in June at Rockcastle County High School where \$15,616 was raised as a community for the American Cancer Society.*

**122** events **+** **8,475** community touches



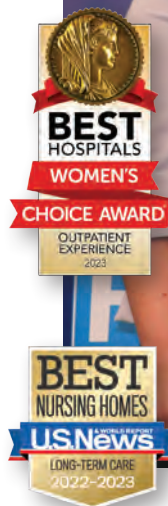
*Kaylee Brock, patient care tech, conducts a stroke screening on Darlena Allen at the Love Your Heart event in February.*



In 2023, Rockcastle Regional received the **Kentucky Hospital Association's Quality Award** for the thirteenth time in the last 19 years. This time, it was for the organization's extensive efforts to promote and support the emotional and physical well-being of its employees in the post-pandemic era.

The hospital was named one of America's Best Hospitals for Outpatient Experience by the **Women's Choice Award** for the fifth year. It was one of only 282 award recipients in the nation to be named to this list.

Rockcastle Regional was recognized as a **Best Nursing Home for Long-Term Care** for 2022-2023 by U.S. News & World Report. Only 16 percent of the U.S. skilled-nursing facilities earned the "Best Nursing Home" designation this year. Rockcastle Regional earned its place on the list by achieving the highest possible rating, "High Performing," for its long-term care services.



*Jana Bray and Carrie Mullins accept the Kentucky Hospital Association's (KHA) Quality Award from KHA president and CEO, Nancy Galvagni, for Rockcastle Regional's work with its Employee Assistance Program.*

# Milestones and awards

## Level 4 trauma recertification

In a significant achievement that underscores its commitment to providing exceptional healthcare, Rockcastle Regional earned recertification as a Level 4 Trauma Center.

The designation signifies that the facility is equipped and staffed to provide initial evaluation, stabilization, and diagnostic services to trauma patients. It is also prepared to provide advanced trauma life support (ATLS) prior to transfer of patients to a higher level trauma center.

## Clinical initiatives

Sepsis care became an organizational emphasis in 2023. (Sepsis is a condition in which the infection-fighting processes turn on the body, causing the organs to work poorly.) The hospital implemented best practices to provide the most current screening and treatment for patients that may present with or develop symptoms consistent with sepsis. These include such measures as screening at presentation and collection of blood cultures and lactic acid level within an hour of presentation.

Enhanced care for pressure ulcers was also a focus in 2023. Additional staff were hired for the wound care program, and the organization purchased new bed surfaces – nearly all of the facility's beds now are "low air loss" to reduce risk of pressure. Decisions were made also to upgrade skin care product lines and add capacity for surgical intervention of wounds with need for debridement.

## Nurse Management Leadership Changes

**Kaitlyn Clontz, RN,**  
East Wing nursing coordinator

**Chasity Burke, RN,**  
West wing nursing coordinator

## Physician Retirements



**Eduardo Gomez, MD**  
Radiologist, practiced at Rockcastle Regional for 20 years

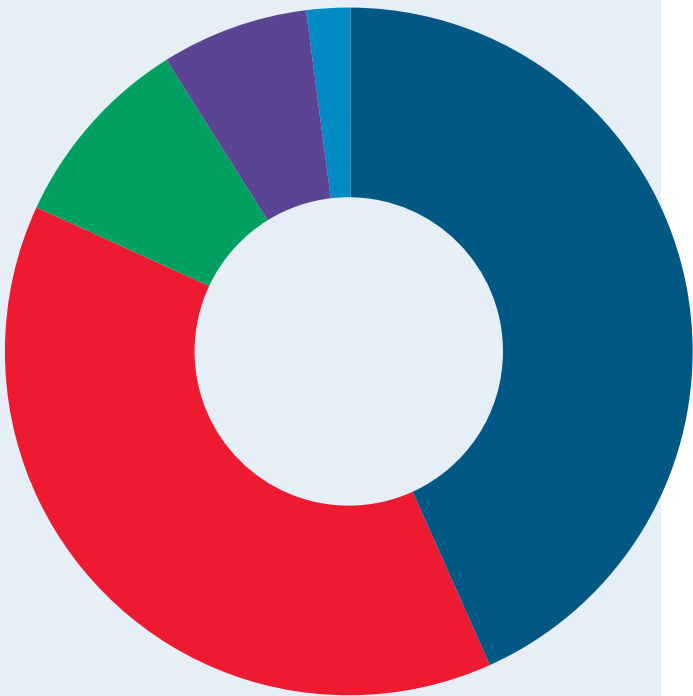


**David Brabon, MD**  
Cosmetic, Plastic & Reconstructive Surgeon, practiced at Rockcastle Regional for 27 years



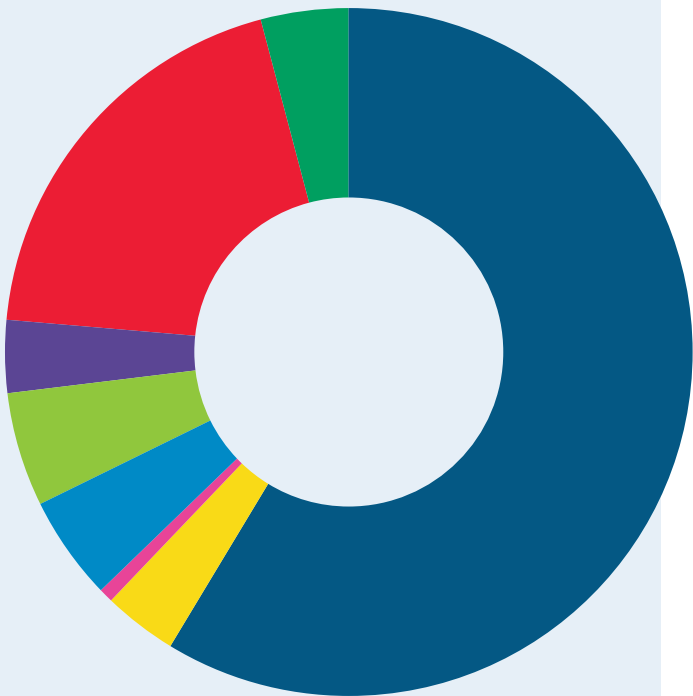
# Revenue

■ Skilled nursing facility	46.64%
■ Outpatient	35.22%
■ Inpatient	9.34%
■ Rural Health Clinic	6.85%
■ Other	1.84%



# Expenses

■ Salaries & benefits	58.7%
■ FICA	3.54%
■ Provider tax	0.59%
■ Purchased services	4.98%
■ Depreciation	5.26%
■ Uncompensated care	3.42%
■ Supplies	19.5%
■ Other	4.15%







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